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ABSTRACT

The resignation speeches of West German Chancellor Willy Brandt and United States President Richard Nixon are compared and the rhetorical efficacy of each figure is assessed in this paper. Analog criticism is employed to support the argument that in the particular subgenre of "scandignation" addresses, Brandt came much closer than Nixon in achieving his objectives, repairing his tarnished ethos, and meeting the expectations of his auditors. (Author/FL)

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"International Analog Criticism: The Scandignation Addresses of Willy Brandt and Richard Nixon"

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A B S T R A C T

The major purpose of this paper is to compare and contrast the Brandt/Nixon resignation speeches and to assess the rhetorical efficacy of the respective rhetors. Analog criticism is used to support the argument that in the particular sub-genre of scandignation addresses Brandt came much closer than Nixon in achieving his objectives, repairing his tarnished ethos and meeting the expectations of his auditors.

Introduction

During a ninety-one day period in 1974 two dramatic events without direct historical parallel occurred: the resignations of West German Chancellor Willy Brandt and U.S. President Richard Milhous Nixon. The events that led to the national political firsts are well known and do not require detailed repetition.[1] A brief review of the rhetorical contexts from which the two resignations grew should suffice.

Willy Brandt's resignation was precipitated by the April 24, 1974, arrest of the East German spy, Gunter Guillaume. On April 26th Brandt declared in the Bundestag that he would not take the easy way out and claim executive privilege regarding the matter. He conceded that he had been briefed in May of 1973 concerning Guillaume's alleged espionage activities. On the advice of his security agents Brandt became an agent provocateur, hoping to ensnare Guillaume further and amass additional incriminating evidence against him and his accomplices. At the same time Brandt maintained that Guillaume's official tasks as aide de camp did not require access to secret information. But shortly after Brandt's initial observations it was revealed that classified top-secret teletypes pertinent to NATO had indeed been seen by the spy during the summer vacation he had shared with the Chancellor in Norway the preceding year. As events progressed it also became clear that the opposition press

planned to turn the Guillaume incident into a spy-and-sex scandal of major proportions. Indications were that they would make the most of calumny and slander and drag Brandt's private life (his love for whiskey and women) into public speculation.

In contrast to Brandt, Nixon faced a disenchanted public, long frustrated by the mounting pressures of the Watergate affair. He left his office only after it was clear that he had, in fact, no other recourse. With the August 5th release of the June 23rd transcript of his conversation with H.R. Haldeman, Nixon had revealed that which he had vehemently disputed for two years: that he had personally ordered the Watergate cover-up only six days after the break-in. In view of these tapes it was impossible to escape the impression that the President indeed had obstructed justice in his restriction of FBI investigations by claiming falsely that vital CIA operations would be revealed. After the "smoking gun" disclosure even the strongest Nixon supporters found it impossible to agree with his self-evaluation that he "was not a crook." The immediate effect of the new revelations was catastrophic. Nixon could no longer count on sympathetic support and his chances for acquittal in the impending impeachment proceedings were nonexistent. At most he could count on fifteen votes for acquittal in the Senate. Toward the end the only question which remained was <u>how</u> Nixon was going and <u>when</u>, <u>not</u> <u>if</u>.

A brief overall comparison of the two rhetorical situations indicates the following similarities: (1) Both men occupied similarly significant power positions. (2) Both heads of state enjoyed landslide election victories in 1972. (3) Both experienced similar declines in public support in the interim. (4) Both were labeled adept foreign policy makers who only showed moderate interest in domestic affairs. (5) Both terms of office were shattered by crises and scandal.[2] (6) In the end both men could no longer fulfill the expectations of their offices and the charges leveled against them rendered them incapable of performing their elected tasks. (7) Public reaction to their respective scandals was also similar.[3] And (8) both were trapped by what Ray Price refers to as the "Profumo factor" (an allusion to John Profumo, Britain's former war minister, who had to resign, not because of the Christine Keeler sex-and-spy scandal, but because he had lied to the House of Commons).[4]

It is also appropriate to briefly cite some of the major differences in the rhetorical environments of the two men: (1) The major difference, of course, relates to the role of political accountability in their respective political systems. In this case, however, this difference had only minimal significance, since Brandt's party at the time of his resignation commanded a majority in the Bundestag. (2) Brandt's fall from power was the result of short-lived controversy and his resignation was totally unexpected and quite a shock to

the German public. In contrast, Nixon's resignation was the result of a long, protracted controversy, and his resignation was anticipated long before his personal resolve to resign. Months prior to his withdrawal the American press had prepared political obituaries pending his departure from the White House. (3) The most rhetorically critical difference between the two resignations pertains to the audiences' perceptions of the rhetors' choice: Nixon had none while Brandt did. Given the political realities of the situation Nixon's resignation was a foregone conclusion. Brandt, on the other hand, had a number of possible response options available to him: (a) He could have fired or asked for the resignations of responsible aides; (b) He could have offered a Harry Truman type apologia reminiscent of the Harry Dexter White affair; (c) He could have quit both the Chancellorship and the party leadership; (d) He could have quit one or the other; (e) He could have run for the Presidency; or (f) He could have left the political stage altogether. And (4) the written resignations of the two men differed significantly. In Brandt's resignation letter addressed to President Gustav Heinemann he accepted the "political responsibility for negligence in connection with the Guillaume espionage affair." Nixon's letter of resignation directed to Secretary of State Kissinger made no reference to the scandal that led to his abdication. His one sentence letter read as follows: "I hereby resign the Office

of President of the United States." Both written documents served as a prelude to the oral pronouncements which followed.

Method

The situational similarities of the two events merit close rhetorical scrutiny and invite analog criticism.[5] Comparing two speeches of the same rhetorical genre, removed from one another in time, space and culture, enables the critic to assess the relative merit of each compared to the other. The analog critic has "no a priori grounds for judging either--[speaker] the more worthy rhetorician"[6]; he is "less concerned with creating a prototype than he is with 'characterizing' an actual discourse."[7] The critic thus seeks to determine the elements of generic commonality which define a particular form of discourse. Classifying the invariants of the genre makes it possible for the critic to ascertain which rhetorical strategies and tactics represent the individual speakers' choices and which were constrained by the situation. As a result, the critic is able to postulate the enduring characteristics of rhetorical genres. Analog criticism also allows the critic to view speeches, not as discrete and isolated events, but rather as part of ongoing and recurring rhetorical situations. The major objective of this analog criticism is to compare and contrast the Brandt/Nixon resignation speeches and to assess the rhetorical efficacy of the respective rhetors.

All critical efforts to date have generically classified the Nixon resignation speech as a form of apologia, specifically as the sub-genre of explanative address.[8] Although current studies of the Nixon address acknowledge that it does not conform to the constants previously postulated for apologetic discourse, the classification persists. Such convenient pigeonholing of the Nixon speech is reminiscent of the formulary propensities of the neo-Aristotelian critics and many current Burkean pentad enthusiasts. Such approaches ignore Jamieson's advice to the generic critic. She cautions that: "Genres should not be viewed as static forms but as evolving phenomena. One should approach study of genres with a Darwinian rather than a Platonic perspective. While traditional genres may color rhetoric they do not ossify it. Rhetors perpetually modify genres. New genres do emerge. Neither does genre necessitate critical stagnation. An understanding of genre will enable the critic to explicate a work, to explore the continuity and discontinuity of rhetorical forms, and to cast a work into productive perspective."[9] Although considerable contemporary research has focused attention upon and augmented our knowledge of apologetic forms of discourse[10] the automatic inclusion of resignation speeches under this genre does not provide such "productive perspectives."

Resignation discourse may be more appropriately subsumed under the genre of concession speeches. The argument for

this particular classification is more convincing when we examine the fundamental differences between the two genres. The concession speech as an epideictic form "is a response to an outcome unfavorable to the speaker and thereby is designed to control an audience's perception of a fait accompli rather than to influence the determination of a specific controlling policy or act."[11] On the other hand, the apologetic speech as a form of forensic discourse seeks to influence the resolution of the conflict at hand. Although both genres deal directly with the image of the speaker, the conceder addresses his audience as a "loser" while the apologist suggests that he is a "winner."[12]

Apologia and concession are thus two distinct genres of rhetorical discourse. The apologia as a speech of self-defense is produced in an effort to repair the rhetor's damaged ethos and allow him to continue in his present capacity. The concession as a speech of submission is produced in an effort to symbolically recast the speaker's negative image albeit his substantive defeat. These distinctions coupled with the meaning of the term resignation (giving up or relinquishing a position, office or trust) support the generic classification advanced.

"Genres are shaped in response to a rhetor's perception of the expectations of the audience and the demands of the situation."[13] The situational similarities and shared expectations and demands of the Brandt/Nixon speeches invite

further discrimination among the types of discourse within a particular genre. Resignation prompted by scandal calls for rhetorical responses fundamentally different from those expected when someone resigns due to reasons of ill health or personal preference. Although resignations under a cloud of scandal usually involve individuals lower on the political totem pole,[14] scandignation involving heads of state may prove to be a recurring twentieth-century phenomena, with the abdication of Edward VIII preceding the Brandt/Nixon departures, and Yizhak Rabin's withdrawal succeeding them.

Scandignation speeches are rhetorical rituals designed to control public perceptions of the rhetor's decision to withdraw as a consequence of alleged or actual wrongdoing. Since both Brandt and Nixon resigned under a cloud of scandal, both their audiences had similar expectations regarding their public pronouncements. Accordingly, both had similar objectives when addressing their publics. Both needed to reconcile their acts of resignation with a favorable view of their characters; essentially both men had to engage in an exercise in credibility reparation. Both had to deal with and seek to reverse the negative responses associated with resignation, particularly the implications of guilt. And both had to reduce the tension level produced by the conflict and its resolution through resignation.

Staging

Once the decision to resign has been reached the resigner has one of three sequential rhetorical response options: (1) he may tender his resignation in writing and elect not to offer a public accounting of his actions; (2) he may elect to announce his intention to resign and then follow through officially; or (3) he may tender an official resignation and then offer a public explanation. The speaker's control of the timing variable reflects how he views himself as well as how he would like his auditors to see him. When Brandt addressed the German nation he was already free of the duties of the Chancellorship. On May 6, 1974, he tendered his official resignation; on May 7th he informed his party leaders; and on May 8th in a nationally televised address he explained the reasons for his decision to resign. In marked contrast, Nixon chose to address his American auditors as President. His televised speech to the nation preceded his resignation; the former was aired August 8, 1974, and the latter became effective August 9th. As such Nixon preferred the persona of office, no doubt, hoping to identify himself until the very end with the reverence that most Americans show for the institution of the Presidency. This deliberate staging came as no surprise to those familiar with Nixon's "I am the President" posture. Not only did Nixon's staging for his "Man in the Arena" speech reflect this "singular

confluence of the job with the man,"[15] but the content of the message itself supports this conclusion. In his sixteen minute address there are twenty-four allusions to public office, that is, every forty seconds, e.g. "the term of office to which you elected me," "the duties of this office," "as President," "the Presidency," etc.

In controlling the time variable Nixon also made the most of the suspense of the moment. "Good evening. This is the 37th time I have spoken to you from this office where so many decisions have been made that shape the history of this nation." That introduction is quite compatible with Nixon's Presidential posture and sounds much like another routine Presidential pronouncement. To his opponents, no doubt, the reference to decisions reached in the Oval Office brought to mind the Watergate cover-up and related decisions that were planned there too. The substantive development that followed was also consistent with the Nixon strategy. He offered his reasons for resignation and then provided the anticipated climax: the decision itself.

Tone

It is assumed that a rhetor's perception of his rhetorical environment will determine the characteristics of his discourse as well as his manner of presentation. As Gonchar and Hahn observed in 1971 "Nixon has <u>become</u> what he was merely elected to <u>represent</u>." That is: "To Nixon, the Nation

and the President are one."[16] Given his preference for the persona of office the tone of the speech is not wholly unexpected. Once Nixon elected to work within the context of the office of the Presidency his demeanor could be predicted. The posture affected his rhetorical options. He had to separate his personal motives from those that could be attributed to a President. What might be compatible with the man might not be compatible with the office of Chief Executive. Nixon, clearly, seemed more comfortable with the motives ascribed to the Oval Office than to his own. Thus we find that his overall attitude, expressed both verbally and nonverbally, was conciliatory, particularly regarding his opponents. There were no direct attacks on enemies or the press; there was no visible sign of bitterness. The strategy was predictable. Jeffrey T. Bolgiano, one of the White House speechwriters who helped Spiro Agnew draft his farewell address, speculated what Nixon's resignation would be like, should it occur:

> Very probably it would be dignified, proud, not a little melodramatic, but more unifying than divisive all in all, if his advice to Agnew under similar circumstances is any guide. Notwithstanding a full quarter century of Herblock portrayals of this man as meanness incarnate, if he is finally forced to quit I would look for

> the gracious Nixon of 1960, the man generous in defeat as he announced from the Senate rostrum the Electoral College tally that would make John Kennedy President--not the sorehead of 1962 who lashed out in the famous "Last Press Conference." The President's strange pep talk to Agnew ...for all the ethical myopia it reveals, would at least seem to augur that kind of bigness in a departing Nixon.[17]

Nixon's address, on the surface at least, conforms to Bolgiano's prediction. As always though, Nixon faced the same problem: "Nixon in the Presidency wants to make a good impression. At the same time, he wants to be himself, to be sincere. These purposes may not always be congruent."[18] In depth analysis of the Nixon text reveals that recurring difficulty. For his final Presidential address Nixon asked Ray Price to include the Theodore Roosevelt quotation that had been circulated on parchment to Nixon loyalists after his defeat in 1960. The complete quotation reads as follows:

> It is not the critic who counts, not the one who points out how the strong man stumbled or how the doer of deeds might have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred with sweat and dust and blood; who strives valiantly, who errs and comes short again and again; who knows the great

> enthusiasms, the great devotions, and spends himself in a worthy cause; who, if he wins, knows the triumph of high achievement; and who, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who know neither victory nor defeat.[19]

This defiance in defeat was considerably watered down for the final Nixon draft.

> ...always I have taken heart from what Theodore Roosevelt once said about the man in the arena whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood, who strives valiantly, who errs and comes short again and again because there is not effort without error and shortcoming, but who does actually strive to do the deed, who knows the great enthusiasms, the great devotions, who spends himself in a worthy cause, who at the best knows in the end the triumphs of high achievement and with the worst if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly.

The rationale for the adaptation is explained in Ray Price's new book, With Nixon: "The full quote was pure, quintessential Nixon, and I could understand his wanting to use it at this moment as he tried to salvage some dignity from the darkest day of his life. But if he did it would be taken as kicking

the critics, and seized on by them as a reason for kicking back. So, in working it into the speech, I looped off the beginning and end, and kept just the middle--just the man in the arena, not the carping critics and the timid souls. When I told him why, he agreed."[20]

Although Presidential posture prevailed for the sake of impression and with hopes of precluding further criticism, Safire notes that "those who invested their lives in the causes he shared will never forget that Nixon failed, not while daring greatly, but while lying meanly."[21]

Situational Demands and Audience Expectations

The standards of rectitude demanded of public officials, particularly heads of state, are quite high. Public confidence in national leadership is contingent upon officials meeting those standards.[22] National leaders are accountable to the court of public opinion and violations of public trust call for explanatory responses from those charged with wrongdoing. When a scandal is resolved through the resignation of a head of state the citizens of his nation are concerned and perhaps even confused. They require an explanation, an explanation in which the resigner yields on the issues, accepts responsibility (guilt) for his actions, clarifies his motives or intentions, and expresses remorse or regret for his deeds.

Since both publics had been deluged by media reports and allegations concerning the scandals, both speakers were

expected to yield on the issues that were established. Neither speaker was the ultimate nor the only source of public interpretation of the events surrounding the resignations. Thus for both speakers their ability to create and sustain salience and meanings in their audience was limited. Their respective interpretations of public events had to mesh with the media messages already disseminated.

Willy Brandt

With his resignation of May 6th Willy Brandt assumed the full brunt of the consequences of the spy affair for himself and alone took full responsibility for his actions. His letter of resignation forwarded to President Gustav Heinemann made direct reference to his acceptance of "political responsibility" for the espionage affair. In his May 7th address to his party board Brandt endeavored to clarify any "misunderstanding" that might have resulted concerning his reference to "political responsibility." He alluded to his correspondence with Walter Scheel which accompanied his letter of resignation and in which he also acknowledged his "personal responsibility." Both were conceded in his televised address of May 8th: "On the evening of May 6 I tendered my resignation to the President, thus taking the political and personal responsibility for negligence in the spy affair."

A combination of political and personal considerations led to Brandt's resignation: "I resigned," he said, "out of

respect for the unwritten rules of democracy, and also so as not to have my political and personal integrity destroyed." That rationale was followed by a three-part explanation.

Brandt did not dispute the facts nor attempt to recast them in a form more favorable to himself. His explanation meshed with that presented in the media. "...whatever I received in the way of advice, I should not have allowed secret papers to go through the hands of the agent during my vacation in Norway in the summer of last year." Brandt thereby publicly admitted that which he had denied in the Bundestag on April 26th. In thus openly admitting culpability Brandt was not compelled to supply further details. He did, however, caution "against worsening the damage through indiscretions and speculation."

After accepting responsibility for security violations Brandt acknowledged that the spy affair had aggravated the climate of relations with East Germany and the Warsaw Pact and that he no longer felt capable of dealing objectively with Eastern relations, at least for a while. The spy affair had also affected him personally; it was a direct blow to the politics of accommodation which he had so vigorously pursued with his Ostopolitik. He also openly conceded that he was motivated by personal considerations. "...there were indications my private life would be drawn into speculation about the spy case." He followed this admission with a self-righteous proclamation that "No matter what may be written

about that, it is, and remains, grotesque to maintain that a German Chancellor can be blackmailed. I certainly, cannot be." This excursus relating to potential blackmail may well have been counter-productive. Rather than laying rumors of his private life to rest it may well have inspired further speculation.

Nonetheless, the balance of motive (political and personal) coupled with his other public pronouncements, e.g. to be accountable to anything that may face him out of office, and to a freer hand in answering media attacks on his private life, are realistic and accordingly palatable for public consumption. Brandt's resignation speech reflects his concern for his self-image as well as his public image. Binder notes that "he had to go because his own image of himself was in grave peril of being destroyed--the image of the German conciliator, integrator, unifier, the German who stood above pettiness, intolerance, hatred, and dirt."[23] Furthermore, exposes of his active love life would not be compatible with the public expectations of the image of a Nobel Peace Prize recipient.

During his televised resignation speech Brandt did not take the opportunity to explore the accomplishments of his tenure (which was by no means devoid of triumphs). In his meeting with the Social Democrats he was also humble. He simply reminded his party associates that during their term

of office they had not "accomplished little." They had set many wheels in motion but much remained to be done. He concluded by saying to them that "now is not the time to lament, but the time to work hard and fight bravely for the good cause of our nation."

Richard Nixon

By way of explanation for his withdrawal Nixon offered the following:

> In the past few days...it has become evident to me that I no longer have a strong enough political base in the Congress to justify continuing... As long as there was such a base, I felt strongly that it was necessary to see the constitutional process through to its conclusion; that to do otherwise would be unfaithful to the spirit of that deliberately difficult process, and a dangerously destabilizing precedent for the future. But with the disappearance of that base, I now believe that the constitutional purpose has been served.

Several implications are immediately apparent: (1) Presidential fulfillment of duties is contingent upon a strong political base in the Congress; (2) the impeachment process should be followed only if one can win; (3) resignation is tantamount to impeachment; and (4) resignation would not set a destabilizing precedent. "All the way back to the

Checkers speech, Nixon had succeeded not by giving us new facts but by giving us new explanations, not by acting but by redefining the meanings of acts."[24] His explanations and redefinitions do not correspond to political reality. Given the cover-up revelations of August 5th Nixon's "political base" explanation is ludicrous. It sounds like he was forced out of office by some legislative coup rather than by his own misdeeds. As the Pulitizer Prizewinning historian, Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr., has observed: "He was being driven out of office, as far as his farewell address told us, only because of the erosion of his 'political base' in the Congress. His Presidency was dying of self-inflicted wounds; and Mr. Nixon talked as if he were the innocent victim of a hit-and-run driver."[25] The political base rationale seems, on the whole, more appropriate to a leader resigning in a parliamentary form of government after suffering a "no confidence" vote on a major policy issue.

Nixon's perception of the situation was strictly political. He acknowledged political defeat, not legal or moral condemnation, nor loss of public confidence. Indeed, if his actions had been legally and morally correct he would not have had to rely on a political base for support. Nixon's political rationale in the resignation speech stands in marked contrast to the concerns he expressed in his 1952 "Checkers" speech when he said: "...it isn't a question of whether it

was legal or illegal, that isn't enough. The question is, 'Was it morally wrong?" Neither question, though both applicable, was addressed in his resignation speech. And in keeping with the evasive stance of his prior Watergate statements it is not surprising that Nixon offered no explanation of how or why his political base had eroded. The speech provided no convincing recognition of the seriousness of the events that led to his demise. There was no reference to the substance of the accumulated charges against him. He failed to address the questions that he purportedly must answer. His interpretation of what was salient did not square with the audience's perception of what was relevant.[27] The public was anxious and confused by Watergate events; they were eager to be supplied with answers, but instead, Nixon provided stimulus for more questions.

Throughout the speech Nixon's focus on the scandal that brought him down was one of time frame only. He did not treat Watergate as an issue. He externalized the situation and made his involvement appear remote. His five vague references support this detached stance: (1) "long and difficult period of Watergate," (2) "the Watergate matter," (3) "events that led to this decision," (4) "these past difficult months," and (5) "the turbulent history of this evening."

What Nixon said as well as his way of saying it reveals

his choices, choices that serve as an index to his character. The way in which he conceptualized Watergate in his discourse misdefined the subject at hand. And although Nixon chose to ignore the issue it did exist in the minds of his auditors. By skimming over Watergate he attempted to recreate the events in his favor. Consequently his listeners justifiably perceived him as evasive. He failed to address that which was salient in their minds.

Nixon made every effort to rehabilitate his image. Throughout the speech he assumed a palliative posture. Eight times, that is, every two minutes, he reminded us that he had acted in our best interests. But, such references aside, his self-serving motives were apparent, and his altruistic claims ring hollow.[28] His perception of reality was far removed from the truths that had been revealed. At the time of the speech Nixon was in no way immune from prosecution and even his "social healing" commentary can be viewed as an appeal to dismiss further actions against him. "As we look to the future, the first essential is to begin healing the wounds of this nation. To put the bitterness and divisions of the recent past behind us and to rediscover those shared ideals that lie at the heart of our strength and unity as a great and as a free people." Nixon must have given some thought to the possible civil and criminal proceedings to which he might be subject.[29]

Nixon, the man of six crises, expressed no remorse, offered no genuine contrition, during this his final and seventh crisis. Even his statements of regret, expecting one ("I regret deeply any injuries that may have been done in the course of the events that led to this decision.") were expressions, not of regret for his misdeeds, but expressions of regret at leaving the office of the Presidency prematurely ("I shall leave this office with regret at not completing my term...."). Even the first statement of regret is not a personal one. He does not say "I regret any injuries I have caused" rather the emphasis is on injuries "that may have been done in the course of events." By whom, he does not say. Nixon's involvement with the Watergate scandal is still made to appear remote.

Again, those familiar with Nixon's past rhetorical efforts could predict the absence of apology and acknowledgement of wrongdoing. Gonchar and Hahn characterized Nixon in 1971 as "an elected official who views his popular mandate as an absolution from error."[30] This astute observation has been supported by one of Nixon's former ghostwriters, William Safire, who noted that one of Nixon's four common denominators was "never apologize or look back."[31] Other observers have aptly paraphrased Erich Segal's Love Story to describe Nixon's operating notions of the Presidency: "being President means never having to say you're sorry."[32]

Accordingly, in Nixon's speech we find no concession of anything more serious than errors of judgment and those made in the best interests of America: "I would say only that if some of my judgments were wrong--and some were wrong--they were made in what I believed at the time to be the best interest of the nation." That reluctant admission ("if some of my judgments were wrong") asks us to simply accept that his errors sprang from good intentions and that he was not guilty of more than disappointing us. The reference to some wrong judgments lacks specificity. There is no indication of which judgments were wrong; we can only speculate the referants alluded to in the speech.[33] His auditors were left in the position of the participants on the game show, Jeopardy: Nixon supplied the answer and the listener had to supply the question. Filling in the blanks could be quite a challenge, ranging from his judgments concerning the bombing of Cambodia to filling-in the White House swimming pool.

A month after the resignation, in accepting Gerald Ford's "full, free and absolute pardon...for all the offenses against the United States which he has committed or may have committed or taken part in" we still find no admission of guilt or wrongdoing.

> Looking back on what is still in my mind a complex and confusing maze of events, decisions, pressures and personalities, one thing I can see clearly now

> is that I was wrong in not acting more decisively and more forthrightly in dealing with Watergate...[34]

Vintage Nixon still acknowledges errors of omission ("not acting more decisively and more forthrightly") and not errors of commission (that his decisive and forthright actions in the Watergate scandal were illegal).

Three years after his disgraceful resignation we still find him maintaining the same evasive posture and frustrating the expectations of his auditors. Admission of wrongdoing is still beyond him. "People didn't think it was enough to admit mistakes. Fine. If they want me to get down and grovel on the floor, no. Never. Because I don't believe I should." For Nixon there is no middle ground between acknowledging error and groveling on the floor. In the May 4, 1977, Watergate interview David Frost repeatedly tried to get Nixon to go further than admitting mistakes, but to no avail. Throughout the interview Nixon continued to advance his major exculpatory argument that he was not criminally guilty because his motives were political and humanitarian.

> My motive was, in everything I was saying, or certainly thinking at the time, was not to try to cover up a criminal action. But to be sure that as far as any slipover, or should I say slop-over, I think would be a better word. Any slop-over in a way that would damage innocent people, or blow it into political proportions...it was that that

I certainly wanted to avoid.

...my motive was not criminal. I didn't believe that we were covering any criminal activities.

I was trying to contain it politically. And that's a very different motive from the motive of attempting to cover-up criminal activities of an individual. And so there was no cover-up of any criminal activities. That was not my motive.

Nixon is still stonewalling it, maintaining a legally untenable position that his absence of motive precluded criminal intent, neglecting that when intent and foreseeable consequences are sufficient, motive is irrelevant.

As always, Nixon was more rueful than remorseful as he continued in his electronic memoirs: "...while technically, I did not commit a crime, an impeachable offense...these are legalisms. As far as the handling of this matter is concerned, it was so botched up. I made so many bad judgments. The worst ones, mistakes of the heart, rather than the head."

Such repeated rationalizations may be convenient, though incredible, given Nixon's short-circuiting of the impeachment process through resignation and his September 8, 1974, acceptance of the Ford pardon. Public perception and Nixon's self-perception were and are still at odds. Leon Jaworski reminds us that Nixon's acceptance of the pardon "amounted to an admission of guilt; one does not desire a pardon to hang on

one's wall next to diplomas and awards of merit."[35]

In trying to counter his negative image, Nixon sought to recast the public's focus of attention. Sixty-five percent of his resignation speech was devoted to a recitation of his foreign policy accomplishments. The way in which he tallied his merits was quite compatible with his overall face-saving strategy. But self-praise used in this way may well have been counterproductive since the diversionary tactic is quite transparent. Had Nixon avoided detailing his foreign policy legacy, the speech would have conformed more closely in length to Brandt's, Edward VIII's and Rabin's. Ray Price, coauthor of the speech, recounts how the triumphs came to be included in the final draft. "Initially we had avoided detailing any of his specific accomplishments. Now it was obvious that he had been thinking about them, brooding about them, reaching back to his triumphs for solace."[36]

Nixon's failure to deal with the real issues involved and his detailed citation of accomplishments leads me to conclude that the speech was composed with an eye to history rather than to his immediate audience. "An American Rip Van Winkle," writes George F. Will, "who had been fortunate enough to sleep through the last two dispiriting years, but who had the miserable bad luck of waking up a day too soon, just in time to see Mr. Nixon's televised speech of resignation from the Oval Office, would have wondered why is the President resigning in the midst of this foreign policy

speech, and what is the 'Watergate matter' he briefly and cryptically referred to once?"[37]

Given this epideictic emphasis the speech sounded like a valedictory address concluding a long and successful term of office. It seemed, on the whole, more appropriate to a retirement address than to a scandignation speech. As Leon Jaworski has observed: "It would have been a good resignation speech for a President leaving office because of illness, or for one who had lost congressional support because of differences over policies. It was not the speech of a President who had violated his constitutional oath and duty by obstructing justice, by abusing the power of his office, by transforming the Oval Office into a mean den where perjury and low scheming became a way of life."[38]

The future historian who will scrutinize the resignation text will no doubt be somewhat perplexed by the following passage: "When I first took the oath of office as President five and a half years ago, I made this sacred commitment, to consecrate my office, my energies and all the wisdom I can summon to the cause of peace among nations. I've done my very best in all the days since, to be true to that pledge." The italicized portion indicates a very narrow conception of the role of the Presidency, but one that conformed to Nixon's self-image as Chief Foreign Diplomat. While he may have been true to that particular pledge, the oath of office requires more. What he neglected is the President's role as chief law

enforcement officer in the United States. In the Nixon/ Frost interviews Nixon finally acknowledged that he "did not meet that responsibility." He revealed further: "And to the extent that I did not meet that responsibility. To the extent that within the law, and in some cases going right to the edge of the law in trying to advise Ehrlichman and Haldeman and all the rest as to how best to present their cases, because I though they were legally innocent, that I came to the edge. And under the circumstances, I would have to say that a reasonable person could call that a cover-up. I didn't think of it as a cover-up. I didn't intend it to cover-up." It would be fatuous even to speculate how his auditors might have completed this particular enthymeme.

Given the Brandt/Nixon explanations for their decisions it seems wise at this juncture to contrast their adaptation to the situational demands and audience expectations generated by their discourse.

Did the resigner yield on the issues?

Brandt: yes

Nixon: no

Did the resigner accept responsibility for his actions and acknowledge wrongdoing?

Brandt: yes

Nixon: no

Did the resigner clarify his motives or intentions?

Brandt: yes (in a realistic and balanced fashion)

Nixon: no (The altruistic motives he advanced did not obscure the transparent self-serving motives there were perceived.)

Brandt's affirmative responses to the above questions assuaged public curiosity and anxiety concerning his alleged wrong-doing. Nixon's failure to respond, on the other hand, cost him dearly. His frustration rather than fulfillment of audience expectations failed to satiate his listeners appetites for explanation. Both speakers failed to express remorse or regret for their deeds. In Brandt's case his positive reply to the above questions sufficed and his auditors did not demand repentance. Nixon's mea culpa was so understated that the absence of genuine regret or remorse was all the more critical.

Observance of amenities

In addition to the four-fold explanation which is required of scandignation rhetors auditors also expect the resigners to observe certain amenities. They expect them to: (1) endorse their successor (assure a smooth transition of power); (2) thank their supporters and express no bitterness toward their opponents; (3) express their gratitude for time served in office; (4) indicate that their decisions were not easy and were made of their own volition; and (5) clarify their future roles (continued commitment to noble goals).

Brandt's public endorsement of his successor was precluded by the legal formalities of the parliamentary system. Although Helmut Schmidt was selected by the Social Democrats to succeed Brandt on May 7th, he was not formally elected by the parliament until May 16th, eight days after Brandt's televised address. While speaking to his party colleagues on May 7th Brandt did support his successor and assured him of his assistance should he ever require it.

Nixon's endorsement of his successor was directly connected with the reminder that he had selected the man that would replace him. "...in turning over direction of the Government to Vice President Ford I know, as I told the nation when I nominated him for that office ten months ago, that the leadership of America will be in good hands." Nixon also took that same opportunity to discuss responsibility--not his responsibility but that which would fall upon Jerry Ford. "In passing this office to the Vice President I also do so with the profound sense of the weight of responsibility that will fall on his shoulders tomorrow...."

Both Brandt and Nixon expressed their gratitude for the support of their friends and made clear that their actions reflected no criticism or bitterness toward their opponents. In his May 7th address Brandt stated that his withdrawal did not imply any criticism of his Cabinet colleagues or other associates. Although others had declared their willingness to surrender their posts Brandt felt that that was either

unjustified or didn't really answer his question. Nixon also made similar visible observations: "To those who have stood with me during these past difficult months, to my family, my friends, the many others who've joined in supporting my cause because they believed it was right. I will be eternally grateful for your support. And to those who have not felt able to give me your support, let me say I leave with no bitterness toward those who have opposed me..." The doctored TR quotation reveals that Nixon's personal feelings may not have been accurately communicated. Dignified impressions compatible with Presidential posture won out.

Both Brandt and Nixon expressed their pleasure and acknowledged their privilege at serving in their official capacities. Brandt noted in the special session with SPD representatives that: "I have been pleased to carry the responsibility of the head of government, but have also consistently felt the pressures that such an office exerts." In a similar though less intense observation Nixon noted: "I shall leave this office with regret at not completing my term, but with gratitude for the privilege of serving as your President for the past five and a half years."

Both Brandt and Nixon asserted that their decisions did not come easily and their resolve to resign followed careful deliberation. In addressing some 230 SPD representatives on May 7th Brandt made repeated references to the difficulty he had in reaching his decision. Considerable

thought and personal reflection had led him to a decision he alone could make. On May 8th Brandt simply referred to the fact that he had examined himself for a long time before coming to his conclusions. Nixon's speech spelled out his dual temptations to fight and quit:

> I would have preferred to carry through to the finish whatever the personal agony it would have involved....
>
> I have never been a quitter.
>
> To leave office before my term is completed is abhorant to every instinct in my body.
>
> To continue to fight through the months ahead for my personal vindication would almost totally absorb the time and attention of both the President and the Congress....

By resisting the temptations of his preferred line and taking instead the alternative in "the bests interests of the nation" Nixon met his personal criterion of rhetorical performance: "the experience of difficulty confirms the moral worth of action."[39]

Both Brandt and Nixon observed that much remained to be done and both pledged their continued dedication to the noble cause of world peace. Despite his resignation from the Chancellorship, Willy Brandt remained SPD party chairman. On May 7th, addressing SPD deputies in the Bundestag, he stated that his political engagement would not and could not be

motivated differently tomorrow than today. On May 8th he promised the German citizenry to continue with all his strength to work for policies that serve people and peace. Nixon observed on August 8th that: "There is one cause above all to which I have been devoted and to which I shall always be devoted for as long as I live." That cause, of course, was "peace among nations." Nonetheless, after his resignation there remained nothing for Richard Nixon other than a self-imposed exile in his Elbe of the Pacific, San Clemente. His promises to continue in the great pursuits of peace were not particularly impressive.

Conclusion

Willy Brandt's concession demonstrated his integrity and may well serve as an example of an honorable world leader who, to borrow Nixon's TR quotation, "failed while daring greatly." During a crisis in government confidence, Brandt's actions restored waning faith in the honor of politicians. He behaved well in difficult circumstances and demonstrated courage in decision-making under great pressure. As James Reston has noted, "he risked his job in order to save his honor."[40] He elected not to deceive the German people. He accepted his errors and did not seek to obscure them. And while we may agree with Jeffrey Boligiano that "the kind of genuine moral growth which leads an individual to condemn his own past acts is very rare--too much so, indeed, to expect it of most men, especially those habituated to the narcotic, power,"[41] in

Willy Brandt we do have such an exception. Brandt's quick reaction to revelations of scandal enabled him to extract himself from very undesirable credibility circumstances and enabled him to salvage his position as party leader.

For Richard Nixon the task of reconciling his resignation with a favorable view of his character was difficult, if not impossible, given the rhetorical strategies he pursued. "Forgiveness...is incomplete without repentance. And repentance, in turn, requires first an admission of wrongdoing."[42] Nixon's persistent failure to own up to his errors and acknowledge his wrongdoing justifiably deprive him of favorable credibility ratings from his auditors.[43] His admissions are insufficient given the facts on public record. His strategy of avoidance, his disregard for his immediate audience and his transparent efforts to refocus public attention on his foreign policy accomplishments all contribute to an unfavorable appraisal of his rhetorical efforts.

In summary, an evaluation of both speaker's individual artistry in responding to the exigencies of their respective rhetorical environments leads me to conclude that Willy Brandt's scandignation address was clearly superior to Richard Nixon's. Brandt came much closer than Nixon in achieving his objectives, in repairing his tarnished ethos, and in meeting the expectations of his auditors.

Footnotes

[1]In addition to contemporary newspaper and magazine accounts a number of books have appeared which detail the events of Watergate and the Nixon resignation. James David Barber, The Presidential Character: Predicting Performance in the White House 2nd Ed. (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1977); Richard Ben-Veniste and George Frampton, Jr. Stonewall: The Real Story of the Watergate Prosecution (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1977); Elizabeth Drew, Washington Journal: The Events of 1973-1974 (New York: Vintage, 1976); Leon Friedman, ed. United States v. Nixon (New York: Chelsea House, 1974); David Frost, "I Gave Them a Sword": Behind the Scenes of the Nixon Interviews (New York: William Morrow, 1978); Leon Jaworski, The Right and the Power: The Prosecution of Watergate (New York: Kangaroo, 1977); J. Anthony Lukas, Nightmare: The Underside of the Nixon Years (New York: Bantam, 1977); Frank Mankiewicz, U.S. v. Richard M. Nixon: The Final Crisis (New York: Quadrangle, 1975); Raymond Price, With Nixon (New York: Viking, 1977); William Safire, Before the Fall: An Inside View of the Pre-Watergate White House (New York: Belmont Tower, 1975); Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr. The Imperial Presidency (New York: Popular Library, 1974); Theodore H. White, Breach of Faith: The Fall of Richard Nixon (New York: Dell, 1976); Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein, The Final Days (New York: Avon, 1977).

The best available contemporary reconstruction of the Brandt resignation is found in David Binder, The Other German: Willy Brandt's Life and Times (Washington, D.C.: New Republic, 1975) and Brandt's own autobiographical account Über den Tag hinaus: Eine Zwischenbilanz (Hamburg: Hoffmann und Campe, 1974). Also see Viola Herms Drath's impressionistic portrait, Willy Brandt: Prisoner of his Past (Radnor, PA: Chilton, 1975).

The text of Richard Nixon's August 8, 1974, resignation speech appears in U.S. News & World Report, (August 19, 1974), pp. 71-72. The Nixon/Frost Watergate interview is found in the New York Times, (May 5, 1977), pp. A16-A17. The German language text of Willy Brandt's televised resignation address of May 8, 1974, is found in Keesing's Archiev der Gegenwart, (May 8, 1974), p. 18665. An unofficial translation of the Brandt speech appears in the New York Times (May 9, 1974), p. L4. The text of Brandt's May 7th address to his party leadership is found in No. 12 of the SPD Auslandsbrief, dated May 8, 1974.

[2]In fact, the actual questions in dispute were similar in both cases: questions of national security, responsibility for actions of subordinates, "hush money," cover-up, and suspected blackmail (in Brandt's case concerning indiscretions in his private life and for Nixon concerning suspected amnesty to be conferred on Watergate participants).

[3]See Brandt, p. 175. Binder, p. 344. Drath, p. 17. A German public opinion poll taken May 2, 1974, showed that sixty-three percent of those asked felt that great damage had been done in consequence of the spy affair. Forty-seven percent of the Germans questioned were of the opinion that those responsible should resign. Also see Newsweek, (May 20, 1974), p. 23. American polls taken as early as May 1974 showed a forty-nine to forty-one percent plurality in favor of Nixon's impeachment and removal from office.

[4]p. 327.

[5]See Lawrence W. Rosenfield, "A Case Study in Speech Criticism: The Nixon-Truman Analog," Methods of Rhetorical Criticism: A Twentieth-Century Perspective ed. by Robert L. Scott and Bernard L. Brock (New York: Harper and Row, 1972), pp. 157-179.

[6]Lawrence W. Rosenfield, "The Anatomy of Critical Discourse," Methods of Rhetorical Criticism, p. 154.

[7]Rosenfield, "Anatomy," p. 155.

[8]See Jeff D. Base, Debut Program paper presented at the Speech Communication Association annual convention, Houston, December, 1975; Gerald L. Wilson, "A Strategy of Explanation: Richard M. Nixon's August 8, 1974, Resignation Address," Communication Quarterly, 24, 3 (Summer, 1976), pp. 14-20. And Richard A. Katula, "The Apology of Richard M. Nixon," Today's Speech, 23, 4 (Fall, 1975), pp. 1-5.

[9]Kathleen M. Hall Jamieson, "Generic Constraints and the Rhetorical Situation," Philosophy and Rhetoric, 6, 3 (Summer, 1973), p. 168.

[10]See Rosenfield, "A Case Study," pp. 157-179. Also Sherry Deveraux Butler, "The Apologia: 1971 Genre," Southern Speech Communication Journal, 37, 2 (Spring, 1972), pp. 281-289. B.L. Ware and Wil A. Linkugel, "They Spoke in Defense of Themselves: On the Generic Criticism of Apology," Quarterly Journal of Speech, 59, 3 (October, 1973), pp. 273-283. Noreen W. Kruse, "Motivational Factors in Non-Denial Apologia," Central States Speech Journal, 28, 1 (Spring, 1977), pp. 13-23.

[11]James W. Chesebro and Caroline D. Hamsher, "The Concession Speech: The MacArthur-Agnew Analog," Speaker and Gavel, 11, 2 (January, 1974), p. 47.

[12]Chesebro and Hamsher, p. 46.

[13]Jamieson, p. 163.

[14]For examples see Howard H. Martin, "A Generic Exploration: Staged Withdrawal, The Rhetoric of Resignation," Central States Speech Journal, 27, 4 (Winter, 1976), pp. 247-257. Also see Edward Weisband and Thomas M. Franck, Resignation in Protest: Political and Ethical Choices between Loyalty to Team and Loyalty to Conscience in American Public Life New York: Penguin, 1976.

[15]Schlesinger, p. 212.

[16]Ruth M. Gonchar and Dan F. Hahn, "The Rhetorical Predictability of Richard M. Nixon," Today's Speech, 19, 4 (Fall, 1971), p. 3.

[17]"On Being Asked to Write Spiro Agnew's Farewell Address," National Review (August 16, 1974), p. 916.

[18]Barber, p. 386.

[19]See Safire, p. 631.

[20]p. 341.

[21]p. 665.

[22]See White, p. 409. "...somewhere in American life there is at least one man who stands for law, the President. That faith surmounts all daily cynicism, all evidence or suspicion of wrongdoing by lesser leaders, all corruptions, all vulgarities, all the ugly compromises of daily striving and ambition." Also note Republican Senator Robert Packwood's "civic lesson" to Richard Nixon, quoted in Barber, p. 478. "For too long, this administration has given the public the impression that its standard of conduct was not that it must be above suspicion but that it must merely be above criminal guilt. Mr. President, that is not an adequate standard of conduct for those who have been accorded the privilege of governing this country."

[23]p. 352.

[24]Barber, p. 475.

[25]Newsweek, (August 19, 1974), p. 59.

[26]The text of the "Checkers Speech" is taken from Irving J. Rein, The Relevant Rhetoric (New York: Free Press, 1969), p. 191.

[27]CBS commentary by Roger Mudd immediately after the Nixon resignation speech reflects the difference in salience. Mudd found the Nixon speech, from a Congressional standpoint, at least not a very satisfactory one. "It did not deal with the realities of why he was leaving. There was no accounting in the speech of how he got there and why he was leaving that Oval Room. That whole question of Watergate is all that anybody in the Congress has had on their minds for the better part of a year. Half the Congress has defended him; half the Congress has gone out on a limb for him. In the absence of any explanation or any acknowledgment of the President's responsibility in the Watergate cover-up the viewer is left to conclude that it was simply some craven politicians in the Congress who collapsed in their defense of the President and solely because of that was he having to leave the Presidency. I think that it was from the Congressional standpoint realistic to think that the President would make some bow toward the hill to accept the blame that he admitted last week was his. But there was nothing like that tonight."

[28]See Safire, p. 13 "In trying to prove himself innocent of knowledge of the break-in and cover-up of Watergate, Nixon ultimately proved his own willingness to put image ahead of reality, his personal interest ahead of the national interest." And Mankiewicz, p. 7 "His resignation, in short, was not remotely to benefit the nation whose ideals he had so clearly betrayed, but only to benefit himself. Had he stayed to be impeached and convicted, which would have happened with scarcely a handful of votes in opposition, he would have been deprived by law of his pension and other payments, and would still have had to rely on the mercy of the new President to avoid criminal prosecution and real penalties. For Richard Nixon, the choice was easy. In the vernacular of the time, he took the money and ran."

[29]If we are to believe Woodward and Bernstein, Nixon did consider punishment and reflected on the possibility of writing his memoirs in jail. In the Final Days they recount a conversation that Nixon supposedly had with Fred Buzhardt where Nixon is reported to have said: "If they want to put me in jail, let them. The best writing done by politicians has been done from jail." p. 483. Theodore H. White also makes note of this presumed conversation; see p. 45.

[30]p. 4.

[31]p. 102.

[32]See Safire, note, p. 102 and Schlesinger, p. 466.

[33]Nixon could have offered an alternate explanation. Ray Price had prepared one focusing on the specific issues at hand. He labeled it "Option B" and includes a section of it in his new book, With Nixon (pp. 330-331).

> Last week, in my review of the tapes to be turned over to the Special Prosecutor, I discovered one that indicated my own knowledge of the Watergate cover-up was greater than I have previously indicated, and that it came sooner--in fact, that I did learn shortly after the break-in that it was a potential source of severe embarrassment to the Administration and to my campaign committee, and that I did, at that time, approve actions which I hoped would have the effect of covering up the connection. (1)
>
> Rather than withhold that tape, I have turned it over to Judge Sirica. I have also made it available tonight to the House Judiciary Committee, so that its records will be complete. (2)
>
> In the light of this, I owe to you, the American people, an explanation of why until now I have continued to maintain that I had no knowledge of the cover-up until I was told about it by John Dean on March 21, 1973. (3)

With hindsight, it is very easy to say that I should have simply opened up everything at once to the prosecutors, and let the chips fall where they might. Certainly the events that have followed have demonstrated that this would have been the wiser as well as the proper course. (4)

At the time, however--whether rightly or wrongly--I was deeply concerned, in human terms, about the possible impact on valued friends and associates, as well as on others who had done wrong in a cause they believed to be right. Because some of the same people were involved, I was concerned that an unlimited investigation might compromise the genuinely sensitive national-security matters that the so-called "plumbers" had been dealing with. In the midst of a political campaign, I knew that the break-in had the potential for massive exploitation as a political issue--and that if a sufficient connection could be established, it conceivably could even be decisive in terms of the outcome, and therefore in terms of all that was at stake both here and abroad, including the foundation I was trying to build for a structure of peace that could last into the next century. (5)

I thought the break-in itself was stupid, as well as wrong. But once it had taken place, I knew that I

had inherited the consequences--and that with the presidency at issue, those potential consequences reached out also to the nation and the world. (6)

In retrospect, it would have been better to have explained this fully and frankly when Watergate and the cover-up again became a national issue early last year--at a time when the cover-up had reached dimension that I still did not fully comprehend. Instead, I felt trapped by events and chose a different way of attempting to defend what I believed to be the interests of the presidency, and to preserve my capacity to function in what I believed to be the interests of the nation. (7)

I say this not in defense, but in explanation. (8)

Although Price felt that that explanation "was somewhat close to the truth of the matter," rhetorical analysis reveals that this potential course would not have fared much better than the actual discourse.

1. Paragraph one does not square with the known facts. Nixon's "discovery" was not made last week; he had listened to the critical June 23rd transcript on May 6th. "Severe embarrassment to the Administration" does jive with the facts and meshes with Nixon's explanation of "political containment" expressed in the May 4, 1977, Frost interview.

2. Paragraph two provides more illusion than reality. "Rather than withhold that tape" sounds like he had a choice. Given the June 24th Supreme Court decision he did not.

3. Paragraph three is right on target---Nixon did owe us an explanation.

4. Paragraph four acknowledges in specific fashion Nixon's errors of commission.

5. Paragraph five detailing an explanation of motive (humanitarian, stately and political) reflects the often discussed Nixon paranoia concerning the press and his messiah-type propogation of the presidential myth.

6. Paragraph six condemns others and introduces mitigation of responsibility--"inherited consequences."

7. Paragraph seven reflects his personal motive within an apparently altruistic one.

[34] Newsweek, (September 16, 1974), pp. 20-21.

[35] p. 298.

[36] p. 341.

[37] National Review, (August 30, 1974), p. 966.

[38] p. 263.

[39] Barber, p. 361.

[40] "A Touch of Class," New York Times, (May 8, 1977), p. L45.

[41] p. 916.

[42] Jerald F. terHorst, Washington Post, (May 9, 1977), p. A23.

[43] Public opinion polls taken immediately after the Frost/Nixon Watergate interview indicate that fifty-one to sixty-two

percent of the viewing audience perceived Nixon a liar. The Seasonwein poll sampled 500 adults, seventy-five percent of whom maintained that they did not respect Nixon. See Washington Post, (May 7, 1977), p. A6.